

Washington, DC - Building on the success of a recent sting operation that marshaled federal, state and local enforcement resources to indict 78 gang members in Newburgh, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Congressman John Hall (D-NY), U.S. Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), today requested that action be taken to designate Orange County as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The HIDTA designation, which would be granted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), would enhance future coordination of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies by providing equipment, technology and additional resources to combat the drug trafficking on which these gangs thrive. The House and Senate members sent a letter to NY/NJ HIDTA Director Chauncey Parker requesting that he work with local law enforcement officials to initiate the petition process necessary to secure the designation.

"As you know, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program allows for increased collaboration between the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to increase communication and information sharing and allows for more effective policing," the House and Senate members wrote in a letter to Parker. "HIDTA is highly effective in its mission to funnel federal resources, such as equipment and technology, to counties with high crime and low resources. It is crucial that Newburgh receive this designation and be eligible for the federal resources necessary to combat this ongoing problem of drug and gang-related violence in Newburgh."

Under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 and the ONDCP Reauthorization Act of 1998, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is authorized to designate areas that exhibit serious drug trafficking problems as HIDTAs. HIDTA-designated counties comprise approximately 14 percent of U.S. counties, and exist in 45 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

Relative to other municipalities across the country, Newburgh has seen disproportionately high rates of assaults and murders per capita in the last several years, making the city among the most violent in the nation per capita. The violence in this small city of 29,000 residents is so pronounced that it has drawn the attention of the Obama administration.

Law enforcement organizations within HIDTAs assess drug trafficking problems and design specific initiatives to reduce or eliminate the production, manufacture, transportation, distribution and chronic use of illegal drugs and money laundering. Through a combination of joint initiatives and resource and information sharing, the HIDTA program helps improve the effectiveness of

drug control efforts.

See the full text of the letter to Parker below.

Chauncey Parker, Director
NY/NJ HIDTA
88 10th Avenue
New York, NY 10011

Dear Director Parker,

We request that you collaborate with local law enforcement officials to submit a petition to the Director of the White House National Drug Control Policy, R. Gil Kerlikowske, seeking a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) designation for Orange County, New York. Submission of this petition is an important first step in providing additional funds to local law enforcement to help address a significant problem of gang and drug violence within the City of Newburgh.

Newburgh, New York recently received national attention for its exceptionally high rates of gang and drug-related crime. The Department of Justice recently collaborated with local law enforcement in an unprecedented show of force in the city of Newburgh that resulted in the arrest of 19 and the indictment of 78 gang members. We commend the efforts of all local and federal law enforcement officers involved and appreciate their timely and decisive action. Unfortunately, this issue is far from resolved. There must be an ongoing effort to ensure that gang and drug violence is dealt with effectively in the future.

Relative to other municipalities across the country, Newburgh, has seen disproportionately high rates of assault and murder in the last several years -- making Newburgh among the most violent cities per capita in the nation. The violence in this small city of 29,000 residents is so pronounced that it has drawn national concern from both President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder.

As you know, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program allows for increased collaboration between the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to increase communication and information sharing and allows for more effective policing. HIDTA is highly effective in its mission to funnel federal resources, such as equipment and technology, to counties with high crime and low resources. It is crucial that Newburgh receive this designation and be eligible for the federal resources necessary to combat this ongoing problem of drug and gang-related violence in Newburgh.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Congressman Maurice Hinchey
Congressman John Hall
U.S. Senator Charles Schumer
U.S. Senate Kirsten Gillibrand